

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-30

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8539

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S E C R E T VIENTIANE 2959

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, LA

SUBJECT: ANTICIPATED SHORTAGE OF MAP FUNDING

1. MY CONCERN AND THAT OF THIS MISSION OVER THE ISSUE OF FUNDING FAR SALARIES TO PERMIT GRADUAL DEMOBILIZATION HAS BEEN REPEATEDLY EXPRESSED TO WASHINGTON. OUR EARLIER CONCERN PALES BEFORE THE HAZARDS PRESENTED BY SECDEF MESSAGE 3037 WHICH INSTRUCTS US TO PLAN NOW TO MEET FY 75 OPERATING COSTS WITHOUT DEPENDING ON MAP FUNDING. IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO OVEREMPHASIZE THE DIRE CONSEQUENCES OF APPLYING THIS POLICY TO LAOS.

2. WE UNDERSTAND THE FISCAL CONSTRAINTS ON THE AVAILABILITY OF FY 74 AND FY 75 FUNDS AS WELL AS THE PROBABILITY OF A CONTINUING RESOLUTION AUTHORITY AT A LOW RATE IN FY 75. INDEED MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO LAOS HAS BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY YET SUCCESSFULLY REDUCED IN FY 74. OUR PROBLEM IS THAT 91 PERCENT OF THE FY 75 MAP EXPENSES WILL BE OPERATING EXPENSES FOR WHICH THE LAO HAVE NO REPEAT NO ALTERNATE SOURCE OF FUNDS. CONVENTIONAL MAP PROGRAMS FOCUSED ON THE DELIVERY OF HARDWARE CAN ACCEPT SOME DELAYS IN DELIVERY. THE LAO PROGRAM IS AMOST EXCLUSIVELY O&M; GASOLINE, MEDICINE, LUBRICANTS, CLOTHES, ETC. THE KING OF RE-STRICCTIONS APPARENTLY ENVISAGED IN THE SECDEF MESSAGE WOULD, FOR EXAMPLE, BRING EVERY FAR MILITARY VEHICLE, PLANE AND GENERATOR IN THIS COUNTRY TO A STANDSTILL. THE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF WHAT WOULD BE TAKEN HERE AS A TOTAL ABANDONMENT OF FAR AND OF THE NON-COMMUNIST SIDE WOULD BE CALAMITOUS.

3. WE NOTE THAT THE SECRETARY AND OTHERS ALLUDE TO LAOS AS THE
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BRIGHT SPOT IN SOUTH EAST ASIA BUT IT WILL NOT BE BRIGHT LONG

UNLESS WE CAN SHOW TANGIBLE CONSTANCY IN OUR SUPPORT. THERE APPEARS TO ME TO BE A TENDENCY TO BELIEVE THAT BECAUSE OF THE PROGRESS WHICH HAS BEEN MADE IN BRINGING ABOUT RECONCILIATION AND BECAUSE FIGHTING HAS VIRTUALLY CEASED FOR OVER A YEAR THAT LAOS NO LONGER NEEDS SUPPORT, PARTICULARLY ON THE MILITARY SIDE, AND THAT EVERYTHING WILL BE DANDY FROM NOW ON.

4. I REGRET TO HAVE TO STATE IN THE STRONGEST TERMS THAT THE FRAGILITY OF THE PRESENT POLITICAL STRUCTURE IN LAOS IS SUCH THAT IT CANNOT WITHSTAND ANY SUDDEN JOLTS SUCH AS THE POSTPONEMENT OF EVERY DAY MILITARY SUPPLIES. THE VIRTUAL CESSATION OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE WOULD CREATE CONDITIONS OF UNCERTAINTY WHICH THE COMMUNISTS MIGHT WELL FIND TOO TEMPTING TO RESIST OR THE NON-COMMUNISTS TOO PAINFUL TO ENDURE.

5. WHEN I SAW PRIME MINISTER SOUVANNA PHOUMA YESTERDAY WITH NATIONAL REVIEW EDITOR DANIEL OLIVER, SOUVANNA COMMENTED IN REPLY TO A THEORETICAL QUESTION BY OLIVER ON A POSSIBLE CUTOFF OF AMERICAN MILITARY ASSISTANCE THAT LAOS WOULD INSTANTLY BECOME A COMMUNIST STATE. THIS IS A VIEW WHICH IS SHARED BY ME AND BY ALL MY ASSOCIATES.

6. ONE CAN ARGUE THAT LAO FOREIGN EXCHANGE MIGHT BE USED TO MEET ESSENTIAL MILITARY NEEDS BUT THIS SEEMS UNREALISTIC TO ME GIVEN THE PERENNIAL LAO FOREIGN EXCHANGE PROBLEM, THE OPPOSITION WHICH CAN BE EXPECTED FROM THE PATHET LAO MINISTERS TO SUCH AN ACTION

AND THE SERIOUS ECONOMIC CRISIS WHICH WOULD BE CAUSED BY THIS DIVERSION OF RESOURCES.

7. WE ARE NOT CASSANDRAS BUT IT IS MOST IMPORTANT THAT SENIOR OFFICIALS OF OUR GOVERNMENT UNDERSTAND THAT THE U.S. ROLE IS VITAL IN MAINTAINING THE EQUILIBRIUM WHICH NOW EXISTS BETWEEN THE COMMUNISTS AND THE NON-COMMUNISTS. THE ROLE WE HAVE PLAYED TO DATE HAS BEEN INTELLIGENT AND CONSTRUCTIVE, BUT THE SOLUTION TO THE WAR IN LAOS WHICH HAS BEEN REACHED AT SUCH GREAT COST WILL BE SHATTERED IF THE NON-COMMUNISTS BECOME POWERLESS. IN ADDITION TO MAINTAINING THE EQUILIBRIUM HERE, WE MUST ALSO AVOID CREATING CONDITIONS WHICH COULD LEAD TO DESPERATE AND

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IRRATIONAL ACTIONS IF FAR AND THE NON-COMMUNISTS ARE DEPRIVED OF REASONABLE AND VITALLY NECESSARY LEVELS OF ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE.

7. I VERY MUCH HOPE THAT CONGRESSIONAL LEADERSHIP IS BEING MADE FORCEFULLY AWARE OF THE PECULIAR SITUATION HERE AND OF THE STAKES FOR WHICH WE ARE PLAYING. I CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT I MAY BE ABLE TO MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO THIS EFFORT AND THAT MY

RETURN TO WASHINGTON MIGHT HELP TO TURN A COURSE OF EVENTS WHICH
NOW APPEARS TO BE GRAVELY IMPERIL U.S. OBJECTIVES IN THIS COUNTRY.
WHITEHOUSE

NOTE BY OC/T: EXDIS CAPTION ADDED PER MR. SARROS, S/S-O.

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